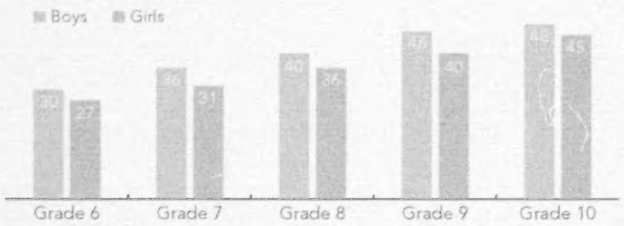
MENTAL HEALTH

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

In the study, many young people in Canada reported positive mental health. For example, more than 50% rated their life satisfaction as "8 or higher" on a 10-point scale. Relatively few (less than 10%) reported high levels of behavioural problems, such as cutting classes or skipping school, talking back to teachers, or getting into fights. About 25% of boys and 30% of girls reported wishing they were someone else.

There were a number of areas of concern expressed by youth with respect to mental health. About 15% of boys and 20% of girls rated their life satisfaction as "5 or lower" on the 10-point scale. Behavioural problems increased across grades, while emotional well-being decreased. Boys were more likely to report higher levels of behavioural problems than girls. Girls reported lower levels of emotional well-being than boys.

BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS (%)



This fact sheet was developed from the *Canadian Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC)* survey. The HBSC survey has been conducted on six occasions in Canada (since 1989) by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University. It profiles the health of young Canadians aged 11–15 years. The 2010 Canadian national report focused on mental health. HBSC in Canada is also part of a larger international study conducted in affiliation with the World Health Organization, with similar 2010 surveys administered in 39 mainly European and North American countries. The Canadian study is supported by funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada.

See: Freeman, J. & Luu, K. (2011). Mental Health. In J. Freeman et al. (Ed.), *The health of Canada's young people: a mental health focus* (pp. 11–26). Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.

For more information about the HBSC study and for Canada-specific data, please visit: www.publichealth.gc.ca

For international data, visit the HBSC global site at: www.hbsc.org

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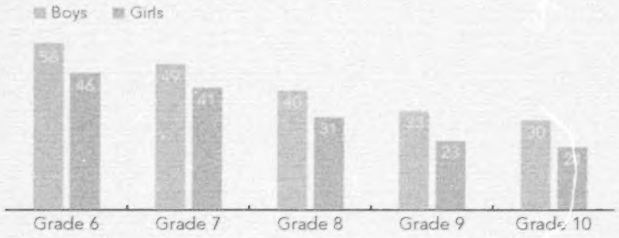
Canada

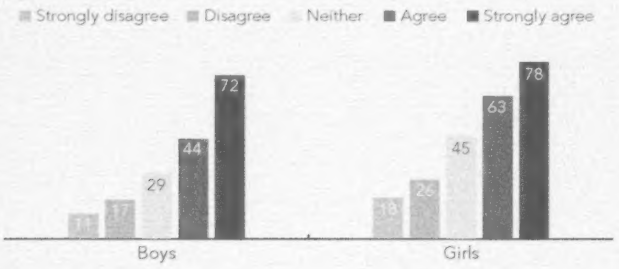
EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING (%)



HOME ENVIRONMENT

The atmosphere in the home was related to mental health for both girls and boys. Students who had difficulties communicating with their parents were more likely to report high levels of emotional problems and less likely to report high levels of emotional well-being. Students who reported having lots of arguments with parents were far more likely to report high levels of emotional problems.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS WHEN "I HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF CONFLICT WITH MY PARENTS" (%)



Fortunately, most adolescents indicated they found it easy or very easy to talk to their parents. About two-thirds of boys and about one-half of girls found it easy or very easy to talk to their fathers, while more than three-quarters of adolescents, whether boys or girls, found it easy or very easy to talk to their mothers.

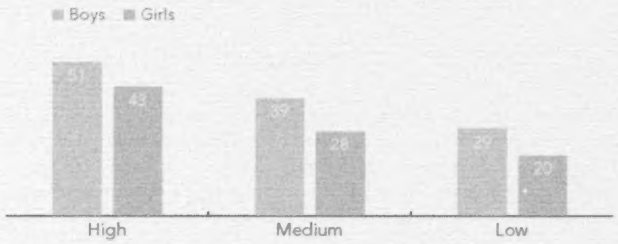
Both adolescents' living arrangements and their perceived wealth were linked to mental health, with students living with both parents having somewhat better mental health than adolescents living in other arrangements. Students who saw their family as above average in wealth tended to have better emotional health than students who self-reported their family wealth as average or below.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

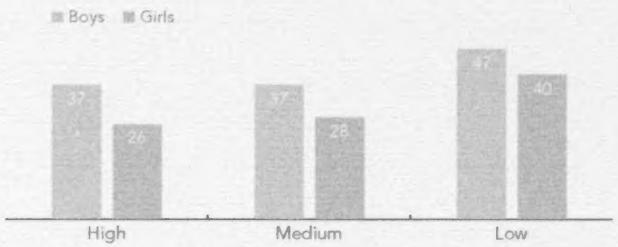
Positive school environments and higher levels of teacher support were associated with more positive mental health. Students who reported being in a school with a positive climate, were more likely to report high levels of emotional well-being. They were also more likely to say they engaged in high levels of prosocial behaviour.

Mental health further varied by perceived level of teacher support. The higher the perceived level of teacher support, the greater was the likelihood of reporting a high level of emotional well-being and a low level of behavioural problems.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND TEACHER SUPPORT (%)



BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS AND TEACHER SUPPORT (%)



PEER ENVIRONMENT

Peer group activities were most consistently related to behavioural problems. More engagement in risky peer group activities, such as smoking, drinking, and cannabis use, connected to more behavioural problems, while more engagement in positive peer group activities linked with fewer behavioural problems.

In contrast, behavioural problems were minimally related to ease of talking with a best friend. However, those adolescents who found it easy or very easy to talk to their best friends (as opposed to those who found it difficult or very difficult) were more likely to report high levels of emotional well-being and prosocial behaviours and less likely to report high levels of emotional problems.

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